
CHAPTER 1
INITIATING A CASE &
ASSIGNING A CASE NUMBER
Administrative Rule 8 & Trial Rule 3

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When a new case is presented for filing in a trial court clerk's office, the first step is the assignment of a case number. [Ind. Trial Rule 3](#) governs the start of a legal action and requires the filing of appropriate documents, payment of any required fees and furnishing documents necessary for service of process. Once the litigant or prosecutor has complied with Ind. Trial Rule 3 (applies to commencement of a criminal case under [Ind. Criminal Rule 21](#)), the trial court clerk's office assigns the case number. The case number reflects the county, court type, court number, year and month of filing, case type and filing sequence. [Ind. Administrative Rule 8](#) requires all trial courts to use the uniform case numbering system. Most counties have computer programs to assist in assigning the numbers but it is important that a clerk understand what the numbers and letters mean.

Additional information regarding issuance of case types is available to registered users of the Supreme Court's INcite application dealing with the preparation of statistical reports.

Court Identifier

Since 1987, all state courts have unique identifiers, based on the county, type of court and court number. The county numbers were assigned in alphabetical order and are listed in Ind. Administrative Rule 8(B)(1). All cases filed in your county will have the same county number.

Section (B)(1) of the rule gives each type of court a particular code. For instance, Circuit Courts of each county are designated with "C" and Superior Courts are designated with "D."

Since many counties have more than one court, each successive court created in each category is numbered. As new courts are created, the rule provides the identity of the specific court. The remainder of section (B)(1) sets forth all the court identifiers, with the county, court type and court number. For reference, the rule retains court identifiers for those courts that were once in existence and have subsequently been abolished.

When combined, the first five characters in a case number identify the county, court type and court number.

Year/Month of Filing

The second group of four characters represents the year and month of filing. At the beginning of each year, the filing sequence (see below) returns to “one.” Thus, it is important that each case number reflects the year the case was filed, to differentiate it from another case with the same filing sequence. In addition, to assist in maintaining the files, it is useful to know the month in which a case was filed. Thus the case number uses a two-digit year and two-digit month grouping.

Case type

The third group of two characters designates the type of proceeding. For statistical purposes, as well as caseload credit, the case type must be accurate. The Clerk and staff should know the difference between the civil case types as well as the nuances between closely related case types. Miscellaneous (MI), Miscellaneous Criminal (MC) and Juvenile Miscellaneous (JM) case types should be used sparingly and only when the other case types specifically do not apply.

Filing Sequence

Beginning each new year, the sequence of filing should start at “1” and continue sequentially throughout the year. If your county maintains separate dockets for case types or groups of case types, then each docket may be given separate sequential filing numbers. By assigning the filing sequence in this manner, the county can keep track of how many cases have been filed in the county at any given time, regardless of case type or court.

For example, 49D06-0709-PL-123 decodes as:

49	D	06	07	09	PL	123
County	Court Type	Court Number	Year	Month		
COURT IDENTIFIER			YEAR/MONTH OF FILING		CASE TYPE	ANNUAL FILING SEQUENCE

Application of the Rule

Because the goal of Ind. Administrative Rule 8 is to promote uniformity across the state, it is imperative that your office knows the components of the Rule and educates new staff as to its application and importance. Judges are given weighted caseload “credit” based on the case type given to a particular filing so it is important that your office identify under which case type a particular filing falls. Also, according to [Ind. Administrative Rule 7](#), your office retains paper case files based on the case type assigned. If the wrong case type is assigned to a particular file, Rule 7 may direct it be retained longer than necessary or destroyed before it should have been.

Information regarding distinctions between case types

Periodically your office will be advised as to case type clarifications. When you receive information, generally from the Supreme Court, make sure you educate your staff as well as post the information for the general public's use. If you have any questions or concerns regarding initiating a case and assigning a case number, feel free to contact the Indiana Supreme Court, Division of State Court Administration for assistance.

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